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Jury convicts analyst of passing secret photos to Jane's

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By Rita McWilliams
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

BALTIMORE — After deliberating for more than six hours, a federal jury yesterday found former naval intelligence analyst Samuel Loring Morison guilty of leaking secret photographs to a world-renowned British defense magazine.

It is the first time in U.S. history an American has been found guilty of violating the 1917 espionage code by leaking secret government documents to the press, according to prosecutors.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Michael Schatzow said he hoped the decision would deter people from giving out unauthorized information "relating to the nation's defense," but said the case would have no bearing on press freedom.

But Morton Halperin, director of the Washington office of the American Civil Liberties Union, said if the case is not overturned, "it will destroy the freedom of the press on national defense secrets."

If the decision is upheld, Mr. Halperin said, the case will do "what Congress has refused to do — create an official secrets act" that will "have a chilling effect" on public debate on national security matters.

Mr. Schatzow criticized the ACLU for conducting "an orchestrated [media] campaign... designed to poison the minds of potential jurors." He portrayed the case as a simple theft case. "It's no different than if I took a Xerox machine. It's a theft."

Morison, 40, of Crofton, Md., was found guilty of two counts of espionage and two counts of theft, and

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faces up to 40 years in prison and a fine of $40,000.

The face of the grandson of the nation's foremost naval historian flushed, but he kept his composure as juror after juror stood and reiterated the verdict — guilty on all counts with which he was charged.

He remains free on $100,000 bond until sentencing, which is scheduled for Nov. 25, and is allowed to leave the area only to visit his mother in New York.

Morison's lawyers refused to comment on the case and quickly ushered Morison out of the federal court building here.

During the trial, testimony was given that Morison admitted to federal investigators that he sent three secret KH-11 intelligence photographs of a new Soviet nuclear-powered aircraft carrier to Jane's Defence Weekly. Jane's published the photographs and used one for its cover in an August 1984 issue.

Investigators said Morison told them he leaked the information so Americans would know the extent of the Soviet military buildup and generate support for the U.S. defense budget.

But prosecutors said Morison flaunted a government oath not to release classified information to get the job of his dreams — full-time work with the prestigious Jane's Publishing Co. At the time, he worked part time as the American editor of Jane's Fighting Ships.

Morison, who never took the stand in the six-day trial, also was found guilty of possessing classified "Weekly Wire" reports detailing an 1984 explosion at a Soviet military installation, which the prosecution said was used to prepare a memo to Jane's, which later ran a story on it.

Top U.S. intelligence officials testified the photographs are valuable to U.S. enemies because they confirm ways in which U.S. intelligence, especially the KH-11 satellite, works in collecting information. But Roland S. Inlow, a retired Central Intelligence Agency offical, had said the photographs would cause no damage to the United States.

Morison allegedly had taken the photographs from a colleague's desk at the Naval Intelligence Support Center in Suitland.

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